

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION:** Examining the academic experiences of international graduate students attending Ball State University

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The purpose of this embedded case study was to describe the academic experiences of international graduate students at Ball State University. Purposive and snowball sampling procedures were used to select nine international graduate students for this study. Their countries of origin were Ghana, Kenya, China, Iceland, Greece, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. Ball State University was the case in this study and the nine international graduate students the units of analysis. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed by means of constant comparison and cross-unit analysis.

The findings of the study revealed the reasons why these international graduate students came to Ball State University to pursue their education, the students' assessments of their academic experiences, and descriptions of their personal and professional development as outcomes of their educational experiences at Ball State University. The main reasons why the international graduate students came to Ball State University were, due to connections they already had with someone affiliated with the university, the quality of the programs offered at Ball State University, and through the award of scholarships. The international graduate students

described their academic experiences as beneficial to their development in a number of ways including, development of research and publication skills, increased competence in the use of technological aids to enhance teaching and learning, and the opportunity to put into practice the skills and knowledge they had acquired through practica and internships. The study participants also expressed that they acquired skills that made them competent to perform in the areas they were trained, for example, therapeutic skills or team skills. They shared that they had grown as individuals because of the experience that they gained at Ball State University. In addition, some stated that their worldview had expanded, and their self-confidence had increased.

The study discusses the findings in the light of the current literature on international graduate student education in the U.S., as well as the implications for future research. The study makes recommendations as to how Ball State University can make use of this new information to better market itself as a first class institution of higher learning, and to make the experiences of international graduate students at Ball State University a more appealing choice to prospective international graduate students.